Oscar winner documents Israeli impunity every day

AT TUWANI: Armed with his camera, Oscar-winning Palestinian filmmaker Basel Adra has spent years in the occupied West Bank documenting what he describes as the impunity Israelis enjoy in their mistreatment of Palestinians.

From his terrace, he points to the nearby Israeli settlement of Maon, just a short distance away. The view appears calm, but he said incidents involving settlers and Israeli soldiers take place almost daily.

The situation has only worsened since the start of the war in Gaza in October 2023, said Adra, the co-director of "No Other Land," a documentary he made with Israeli filmmaker Yuval Abraham that this year won an Academy Award.

"The world allows Israelis — and gives them the impunity — to commit crimes," the 29-year-old filmmaker told AFP at his home in the village of At Tuwani.

In the nine months after accepting his Oscar in Hollywood, Adra has given scores of interviews and captured hundreds of videos capturing settler violence allegedly carried out under army protection.

"Dozens of Palestinian communities, villagers fled from their homes during this time due to the settler and occupation forces' violence and attacks, and killings," Adra said.

Taking a tour to illustrate the difficulties of life for Palestinians in the West Bank, Adra headed to the nearby Bedouin village of Umm al-Khair.

To reach it, one must pass an Israeli settlement.

On a wall, an inscription in Arabic warns: "No future for Palestine." Since the war in Gaza began with Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel, settler and army attacks in the West Bank have killed around 1,000 Palestinians, according to the Palestinian health ministry in Ramallah.

During the same period, Palestinian attacks in the same region have killed at least 43 Israelis, including soldiers, according to official Israeli figures.

PALESTINIAN filmmaker Basel Adra poses with his Oscar trophy in At Tuwani, a village in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.—AFP

Targeted

Even the presence of international and Israeli activists, intended to deter violence, has done little to change reality for Palestinians in the West Bank.

Adra recalled the killing of a close friend, fellow activist Awdah Hathaleen, on July 28.

Hathaleen, he said, was filming "settlers with a bulldozer going through his family land, destroying their olive trees and fence".

His death, widely filmed by other activists and reported in the media, prompted Israeli police to open an investigation, though they did not classify it as murder.

"A couple of days after this criminal settler committed these crimes, he was allowed to come again to the same place, to continue digging the same land," Adra said.

The young filmmaker, who displayed the Oscar statue, has also been targeted.

"I've been arrested several times by the army," Adra said.

"Once, settlers came onto our land, they started pushing us, throwing stones. They had sticks, and one of them had a gun. Two of my brothers were slightly injured." "We called the police. They arrived, but the attack continued while they watched." The military said it had received reports that "several terrorists" had hurled rocks at Israeli civilians near At Tuwani, injuring two of them.

"Upon receiving the report, the security forces were dispatched to the scene, conducted searches in the area, and questioned suspects," the military said.

Adra said that in Masafer Yatta, the cluster of villages that includes At Tuwani, settler activity is unrelenting.

"They keep building settlements and illegal outposts 24 hours a day, seven days a week," he said.

After a long legal battle, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the army in 2022, paving the way for the eviction of residents from eight Palestinian villages in the area.

'We will stay'

In the village of Umm al-Khair, a few concrete houses are surrounded by settler structures — mobile homes flying Israeli flags and permanent structures encircling the Bedouins.

At his desk, community leader Khalil Hathaleen — brother of the slain activist — spreads out 14 demolition orders received on October 28.

According to army documents in Hebrew and Arabic, residents have 14 days to appeal.

"Even if the entire village is demolished, we will stay on this land and we will not leave," Hathaleen said.

"Because there is nowhere else to go." Like other communities in the area, the approximately 200 residents of Umm al-Khair are descendants of Bedouins expelled from the Negev desert in southern Israel in the early 1950s.

About three million Palestinians live in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967. Some 500,000 Israelis live there in settlements deemed illegal under international law.

At the end of October, the Israeli parliament voted to advance two far-right-backed bills calling for the annexation of the territory.

"Growing up, I believed very much in international law," Adra said.

"I believe that the materials that I'm filming, the documentation, when they are seen abroad, somebody is going to do something."—AFP

LONDON: Jonathan Bailey at the Burberry catwalk show during Fashion Week in September—Reuters/file

Wicked star Bailey named 'sexiest man alive' by magazine

LOS ANGELES: English actor Jonathan Bailey, who returns to movie theatres this month in the musical film *Wicked: For Good*, was named this year's "sexiest man alive" by *People* magazine on Monday.

The 37-year-old Bailey said it was a "huge honour" to receive the pop culture accolade previously awarded to stars including Chris Hemsworth and George Clooney.

"Obviously, I'm incredibly flattered. And it's completely absurd," Bailey told *People* with a laugh. He joked that he had only shared the news with his dog, Benson.

The selection of Bailey, also known for his role as Lord Anthony in the steamy period drama *Bridgerton*, was announced on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*.

Bailey played Prince Fiyero in last year's blockbuster *Wicked*, a prequel to *The Wizard of Oz*, and will reprise the role in the coming sequel *Wicked: For Good*. The actor also starred in the dinosaur flick *Jurassic World: Rebirth* this summer.—Reuters

Mamdani poised to become first Muslim NYC mayor

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Muslim background."

Mamdani has drawn strong support from Muslim and South Asian communities, particularly in Queens neighborhoods such as Flushing and Corona, where his heritage and outreach resonated.

Speaking to a crowd, he said: "The dream of every Muslim is simply to be treated as any other New Yorker … I will not change who I am, how I eat, or the faith that I'm proud to call my own … I will no longer look for myself in the shadows. I will find myself in the light."

He has also energised younger voters, many of whom face high rents, soaring living costs, and disillusionment with the old political order. At a major rally, Mamdani told supporters: "There are millions of New Yorkers who have strong feelings about what happens overseas. I am one of them, and I will not abandon my beliefs or my commitments grounded in a demand for equality."

Mamdani's campaign proposals are ambitious: they include freezing rents for one million rent-stabilized apartments, making city buses fare-free, building 200,000 affordable homes, launching city-run grocery stores across boroughs, and taxing the wealthy and corporations to fund these changes. He also proposes ending sole mayoral control of public schools in favour of "co-governance".

A defining feature of the race has been Mamdani's stance on the war in Gaza. He has condemned Israel's military campaign while calling for a cease-fire, saying: "It is cruel, it is indiscriminate, it is limitless, it is criminal killing of civilians. These are the conclusions I've come to." On Israel's right to exist, he added: "Yes, like all nations, I believe it has a right to exist — and a responsibility also to uphold international law."

Polling indicates his positions resonate with younger, progressive voters and immigrant communities, though they have drawn criticism from opponents and pro-Israel groups.

His closest rival, former Governor Cuomo, has attacked Mamdani's experience and political philosophy: "This country is not a socialist country. This city is not a socialist city. The state is not a socialist state. Socialism has never worked anywhere on the globe. Not Venezuela, not Cuba. It's not going to work in New York City."

President Donald Trump also weighed in, warning that federal funding could be affected if Mamdani wins. Mamdani responded firmly: "We will continue to receive funding from the federal government, and it's not because of President Trump's generosity. That's because it is the law."

Halfway through election day, even the conservative-leaning New York Post acknowledged Mamdani's lead — a notable shift from an earlier report, m underlining 20 reaso s for rejecting Mamdani. This highlighted the growing momentum of his campaign across diverse voter blocs.

Polling shows Mamdani gaining ground in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, communities with large immigrant populations. Turnout among voters under 35 is higher than in past mayoral contests. Complaints about long lines and polling logistics have emerged, but officials reported the process remained orderly.

Germany offers cash to Afghans in Pakistan to forgo resettlement

Single woman may get 1,500 euros in Pakistan and a further 5,000 euros if she travels to Afghanistan or a third country

BERLIN: Berlin is offering cash to Afghan refugees in Pakistan if they agree to give up their places on a programme for resettlement in Germany, activists said on Tuesday.

The Afghans were accepted under a refugee scheme set up by the previous German government but around 2,000 have been stuck in Pakistan since conservative Chancellor Friedrich Merz took office in May and froze the programme.

According to the initiative Airbridge Kabul, refugees have been sent a letter offering them money and other support in return for exiting the resettlement programme.

In the case of a single woman, the payments would be an initial 1,500 euros (about $1,700) in Pakistan and a further 5,000 euro payment if she travels to Afghanistan or a third country.

A spokeswoman for the interior ministry said that "there are offers within the framework of a voluntary return programme to Afghanistan or departure to another third country".

The German scheme was aimed at Afghans who had worked with German forces in Afghanistan or who were deemed at particular risk from the Taliban, for example journalists, lawyers and human rights activists.

Eva Beyer from Airbridge Kabul said she was not aware of any refugees in the scheme who planned to accept the German government's latest offer and that many had reacted with shock and outrage.

"I've been trembling all over and can't stop crying," read one message from a refugee which Beyer shared with this news agency. "I don't want money or bread, I just want to live in safety."

Pakistani authorities have in recent months intensified a crackdown on Afghans living in the country without residency.

Over the summer, more than 200 Afghans who were enrolled in the German programme were deported to Afghanistan.

In September, a German foreign ministry spokeswoman said that "an understanding" had been reached with Pakistan that no further arrests or deportations of those in the programme would take place until the end of the year.

However, according to Airbridge Kabul, there were 17 arrests in late October and the situation for Afghans in Pakistan was aggravated by the military clashes between the two countries last month.

The initiative says that the latest letter to the refugees admits that "the procedures in Pakistan must be fully completed by the end of 2025" but adds that "unfortunately, it cannot be guaranteed that all procedures will be completed in time".

Several groups of Afghans in the resettlement programme have been able to come to Germany after taking the government to court, with a group of 14 arriving last Thursday.—AFP

N. Korean troops in Russia to help with 'rebuilding'

SEOUL: North Korea has sent about 5,000 construction troops to Russia since September to help with "infrastructure reconstruction", a South Korean lawmaker said on Tuesday after a briefing by Seoul's spy agency.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been emboldened by the war in Ukraine, securing critical support from Moscow after sending thousands of troops to fight alongside Russian forces.

South Korean lawmaker Lee Seong-kweun said that "around 5,000 North Korean construction troops have been moving to Russia in phases since September and are expected to be mobilised for infrastructure reconstruction." He added that "continued signs of training and personnel selection in preparation for additional troop deployments have been detected".—AFP

Sudan army thanks Trump for truce, vows to keep fighting

PORT SUDAN: Sudan's defence minister said on Tuesday that the army would press on with fighting the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces after the country's security and defence council met to discuss a US proposal for a ceasefire.

"We thank the Trump administration for its efforts and proposals to achieve peace," Hassan Kabroun said in a speech broadcast on state television, adding that "preparations for the Sudanese people's battle are ongoing." "Our preparations for war are a legitimate national right," he said, following the council meeting in Khartoum. No details of the US truce proposal have been made public.

The war, which has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions more over the past two years, has spread to new areas of Sudan in recent days, sparking fears of an even greater humanitarian catastrophe.

After mediating in other conflicts in Africa and the Middle East in recent months, the US administration under Donald Trump is now pushing for a ceasefire in Sudan.

The army-aligned authorities had rejected an earlier truce proposal under which both they and the paramilitaries they are fighting would be excluded from a transitional political process.

The latest discussions follow an escalation on the ground, with the paramilitary RSF appearing to prepare an assault on the central Kordofan region after it captured El-Fasher, the last army stronghold in the vast Darfur region.

People forced to flee El-Fasher have described intimidation and violence from the RSF. Mohamed Abdullah, 56, said he was stopped by RSF fighters while fleeing El-Fasher on Saturday, just hours before its fall.

TAWILA (Sudan): A member of Doctors Without Borders (MSF) counts injured and displaced Sudanese who fled violence in Al Fasher and are receiving treatment at a makeshift clinic.—Reuters

"They demanded our phones, money, everything. They kept searching us thoroughly," he said of the RSF. On his way to Tawila, about 70 kilometres (45 miles) to the west, he saw "a body left on the street that looked like it had been eaten by a dog".

Trump's envoy to Africa, Massad Boulos, held talks in Sudan's neighbour Egypt on Sunday with Cairo's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and then on Monday with the Arab League. During the discussions, Abdelatty stressed "the importance of concerted efforts to reach a humanitarian truce and a ceasefire throughout Sudan, paving the way for a comprehensive political process in the country", according to a foreign ministry statement.

According to the Arab League, Boulos met the regional body's chief Ahmed Aboul-Gheit and briefed him on recent US efforts in Sudan to "halt the war, expedite aid delivery and initiate a political process".

The so-called Quad group, comprising the United States, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, has been engaged in months of diplomacy aimed at securing a truce in the more than 30-month conflict in Sudan.

In September, the four powers proposed a three-month humanitarian truce, followed by a permanent ceasefire and a nine-month transition to civilian rule, but the army-aligned government immediately rejected the plan at the time.

In the aftermath of the RSF's assault on the key city of El-Fasher, reports emerged of mass killings, sexual violence, attacks on aid workers, looting and abductions during the offensive. The International Criminal Court on Monday voiced "profound alarm and deepest concern" over the reports, adding that such acts "may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity".

Speaking at a forum in Qatar, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday called on the warring parties to "come to the negotiating table, bring an end to this nightmare of violence — now". "The horrifying crisis in Sudan... is spiralling out of control," he added. —AFP

Global panel proposed to combat elite wealth capture

In its report to the G20, experts led by Nobel Laureate Prof Joseph Stiglitz recommend the establishment of an international panel on inequality

By Zaki Abbas

ISLAMABAD: An expert committee formed by the South African president ahead of the G20 summit has proposed establishing an international panel on inequality, modeled on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), to inform policymaking addressing rising global inequality.

The Extraordinary Committee of Independent Experts on Global Inequality, commissioned for South Africa's G20 Presidency, pointed out stark inequalities and proposed reforms amid growing concerns about democratic capture associated with wealth concentration.

The committee — chaired by Nobel Laureate Prof Joseph Stiglitz — submitted its report as concerns heighten about global increases in incomes and wealth at the upper end while large population segments struggle to make ends meet.

"Like climate change, unrestrained and growing inequalities also represent a major threat to the global community. It is imperative that we have better knowledge about its evolution and how proposed policy changes might alleviate it — or make it worse," the experts noted.

According to the study, though inequality between all individuals worldwide has fallen in recent decades largely due to income growth in China, prospects for further reduction are uncertain, while the overall income gap between 'Global North' and 'Global South' countries remains very high.

The top 1 percent captured 41 percent of all new wealth since 2000. The richest one percent saw their average wealth rise by $1.3 million, while the bottom 50 percent saw wealth rise by just $585 from 2000 to 2024.

The study revealed that 83 percent of all countries, accounting for 90 percent of the world population, meet the World Bank's definition of high inequality. Countries with high inequality were seven times more likely to experience democratic decline than more equal countries.

The committee highlights how inequality, particularly in extremes, has negative economic, political, and societal outcomes that interact and exacerbate adverse effects. High wealth inequality undermines both democracy and economic progress.

"Recent events since 2020, including Covid-19, the Ukraine war, and new tariffs and trade disputes since the beginning of 2025 are creating a perfect storm which is further increasing poverty and inequality. One in four people worldwide now regularly skip meals, while billionaires' wealth has now hit the highest level in history," it added.

The report said $70 trillion of wealth is expected to be handed to heirs over the coming 10 years, posing a major challenge to social mobility, fairness and equality of opportunity.

Deregulation of financial markets

The report criticised the international financial architecture, deregulation of financial markets, and global taxation system, which generate volatility and compound inequality. "Deregulating financial markets compounded this by generating volatility that could result in crises, with especially adverse effects on those at the bottom of the distribution."

The committee noted it is a misconception that the private sector is more efficient than the public. "This runs counter to evidence that public services, in many cases and contexts, are both necessary and superior."

Privatisation of state-owned enterprises and services in sectors like energy, water, transport, education and health drove up corporate profits and consumer prices, reducing access for the poor and lowering living standards.

These structural policies were typically accompanied by significant austerity measures, including cuts to public spending affecting ordinary people's access to essential goods and services, driving further inequality increases with particularly adverse impacts for women and marginalized groups.

Recent advances in technology, particularly digitalisation and artificial intelligence, have the potential to increase inequalities within and between countries, even as they bring some benefits.

Reforms

The report focuses on international-level policies, including efforts to rein in corporate concentration and reform the international tax architecture. "An agreement among countries to have a minimum corporate income tax would, for instance, help prevent the destructive race to the bottom in corporate taxation."

It calls for reforming international economic rules—redesigning intellectual property rules (especially relating to pandemics and climate change), rewriting tax rules to ensure fair taxation of multinationals and the ultra-wealthy.

National action can include pro-worker regulation, reducing corporate concentration, taxing large capital gains, investing in public services, and more progressive tax and expenditure policies.

The committee proposed reforming governance of international financial institutions to better reflect the contemporary global economy and increasing the IMF's Special Drawing Rights annually along with global GDP increases.

It also proposed debt restructurings and liquidity support for developing countries and emerging markets with excess debt. "The global financial architecture needs reforming to make it less likely that another debt-and-development crisis emerges in the future."